Hope and Healing

Series 2.
From Despair to Hope

HOPE AND HEALING
From Despair to Hope

Series 2

A further set of thirteen Christ Centered
Bible based discussion guides
and support nmaterial for use in a
Twelve step Study Group.
They are best used as a sequel to the
thirteen lessons of Series 1.

CREDITS

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INTRODUCTION

To Series 2

The purpose of the second series of thirteen study guides is to reinforce and expand on concepts expressed in the first series of the Hope and Healing study guides. At times the lessons dig a little deeper into specific issues or aspects of our being that form the foundation of many of life's problems.

In these lessons, there is a strong emphasis on the use of Bible references. The Bible includes many examples of life experiences that illustrate the principles contained in these study guides. Such Bible greats as Peter, Elijah, Ezra and Nehemiah, Daniel and, of course Christ himself experienced some of the same situations we are confronted with today.

Central to the themes of these study guides is love - that principle which is the basis of our Hope and the essential balm for our Healing. Love is the very essence of God's character and being, and is fully demonstrated in and through the life of Christ. It is the basis of our own character transformation and preparation for glorification.

> "O what an assurance is this, that the love of God may abide in the hearts of all who believe in him! . . . This divine love entering the soul inspires it with gratitude, frees it from its spiritual feebleness, from pride, vanity, and selfishness, and from all that would deform the Christian character. (EGW, Christian Education, P. 75)

As was stated in the introduction to Series 1 - A meaningful relationship with Christ forms the basis for character restoration. Ellen White states, "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 69) It is for this purpose that the Second Series has been prepared. The developers of the 'Hope and Healing' program trust that you will find in this Series reason for hope and meaningful help on your pathway to spiritual healing. God bless you as you grow in the grace and glory of our loving Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Pr Leon N Powrie

for the Hope and Healing Team
Reedy Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church

ULTIMATE REALITY

Philosophers have debated what reality is for centuries. The only way for us to determine reality is through our perceptions of what our senses are telling us. In other words, how we see ourselves and the environment we find ourselves in depends on where we are viewing it from (our perspective), the clarity of our focus (our world-view) and the amount and type of illumination available (spiritual light or darkness). Let's look at an experience of Peter that really tested his understanding of reality.

On the way to the Mount of Olives after the last supper, Jesus told the disciples, "All of you will desert me." Peter said, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will. I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you."

Jesus replied, "Peter, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me."

At the olive grove called Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James, and John aside with Him to pray. He said, "My soul is crushed with grief. Stay here and keep watch with me." He went a little farther and fell to the ground and prayed.

When he returned he found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, Couldn't you watch with me even one hour? Watch and pray, for the spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Then he went aside again to pray.

Then he came to the disciples again and said, "let's be going. Look, my betrayer is here!" Judas arrived with a crowd of armed men. Then Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of the high priest's slave.

But Jesus said, "No more of this." And he touched the man's ear and healed him. Then the people who had arrested Jesus led him to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest. Peter followed him at a distance and went into the high priest's courtyard.

A servant girl came over and said to him, "You were one of those with Jesus the Galilean." But Peter denied it saying, "I don't know what you're talking about." Just as he moved away a rooster crowed.

Another servant girl saw him standing there and said, ""This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter Again denied it with an oath. "I don't even know the man," he said.

A relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" Again Peter swore and denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed a second time.

At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me." And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly. (Compiled from the four Gospel records)

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Discussion:

1. Discuss Peter's twisted perceptions of himself and how this impacted his actions and that made his life unmanageable.
2. List and discuss the character defects of Peter that are revealed in this narrative.
3. We see how one denial (lie) leads to another and then another. How have our denials led us to live a lie?
4. How significant was the look of Jesus in stripping away Peter's masks and laying bare the real Peter?
5. Peter went out weeping bitterly. Discuss.

Postscript

It was some days after Christ's death and resurrection and some of the disciples had returned from Jerusalem to Galilee. Peter said, "I'm going fishing". The others replied, "We'll go with you". They fished all night without success. As morning dawned they heard someone on the shore enquiring as to their success. When they told him of their failure he responded by telling them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. They responded (one would think reluctantly) and caught so many fish that the net was about to break. John said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When they came to land, Jesus had food ready for them. After they had eaten, Jesus asked Peter three times whether he loved Him. Peter new exactly why Jesus had asked the same question three times and it saddened him. Then Jesus told him to feed His lambs and sheep. (John 21:1-17)

"Three times Peter had openly denied his Lord, and three times Jesus drew from him the assurance of his love and loyalty, pressing home that pointed question, like a barbed arrow to his wounded heart. Before the assembled disciples Jesus revealed the depth of Peter's repentance, and showed how thoroughly humbled was the once boasting disciple." (EGW, Desire of Ages, p.812)

"Peter was now humble enough to understand the words of Christ, and without further questioning, the once restless, boastful, self-confident disciple became subdued and contrite. He followed his Lord indeed--the Lord he had denied. The thought that Christ had not denied and rejected him was to Peter a light and comfort and blessing." (EGW, Conflict and Courage, p.322)

How often have we cast the net of our actions on the wrong side and have caught nothing but regrets? How often have we, like Peter, thrown in the towel and said, "I'm going fishing"? How often have we felt the pain of failure and humiliation? But then we hear that voice on the shore calling, "Children, do you have anything to eat". We recognize the emptiness of our experience. Then we hear the words, "try the other side, follow my directions and you will have plenty". Jesus is just waiting to share with us His ultimate reality as He did with Peter.

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Now the Ultimate Reality

Now let us take another reality check for Peter. This experience happened several years later, just after the death of Stephen and James, the first Christian martyrs. Take note that Peter is still having problems with reality but in a different way. It is important that we recognize the value of regular reality checks so that we not only get on course but also stay on course.

> About that time King Herod Agrippa began to persecute some believers in the church. He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword.
>
> When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter *and* imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.
>
> The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate. Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter.
>
> The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, "Quick! Get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. Then the angel told him, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." And he did. "Now put on your coat and follow me," the angel ordered.
>
> So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was actually happening. They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself.
>
> So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him. Peter finally came to his senses. "It's really true!" he said. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!"
>
> When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it.
>
> When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!" "You're out of your mind!" they said.
>
> When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel." Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed.
>
> (Extracted from Acts 12:1-16)

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Discussion:

1. What was Peter's first impressions of his dramatic escape from Herod's prison?
2. Discuss his awakening to the reality of the situation.
3. Who else had different perceptions of the reality of the situation?
4. From our own life experiences, discuss In what ways first impressions are not always true to the real situation.
5. In what ways has 'our angel' been working to release us from the imprisonment of our hurts, habits, addictions and compulsive behaviours, from the shackles of our distorted perceptions?

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our hurts, habits, addictions and compulsive behaviours, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Reality Check

"In Step One, we come to grips with the reality of our lives . . . we finally admit defeat and recognize that we need help." (The twelve Steps - A Spiritual Journey, p.33) It is not an easy thing to break free from the prison-house of compulsions, habits, addictions, and hang-ups in our own strength. We know it because we have tried and failed so many times. The following acrostic shows us how we can move toward that Ultimate Reality experience.

R -	recognize	the power of our hurts, habits, addictions, and compulsive behaviours to harm and shackle us.
E -	evaluate	the impact of our hurts, habits, addictions and compulsive behaviours on self and others.
A -	accept	responsibility for our thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions.
L -	learn	that it's safe to let go and let God help us manage our negative thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions.
I -	introspect	through personal reflection and self-examination of one's conscious thoughts and feelings, come to acknowledge the sickness of our soul.
T -	take	the first step toward healing - admit our powerlessness to manage our lives. That is, that we need help.
Y -	yield	our self-will to the divine will of God.

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THE GREATER POWER

In the previous lesson, we faced the step of taking a personal reality check. This should be done on a regular basis. We need to **R**ecognize, **E**valuate and **A**ccept responsibility for the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that can harm and shackle us and hurt others. We need to **L**earn that it's safe to let God help us manage life's issues. Through **I**ntrospection, we are then able to acknowledge our areas of need and **T**ake the first step towards **Y**ielding our wills to God who is able to heal and provide us hope. In this lesson, we want to take the next step on this journey.

Step 2: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Who is in charge? Who has authority in our lives? Let's be honest, we all want to be in charge, particularly in our own lives. But, unfortunately, we may also like to control the lives of others either through coercion, manipulation or codependent behaviours. There may be good reasons why we find it difficult to accept the idea of a loving and caring authority figure. Maybe some of us have suffered at the hands of authority figures (e.g. parents, teachers, police or courts etc.). Even the strongest of us can be intimidated by individuals, circumstances or even by our own perceptions or misconceptions of God. As we read the following story about an event in the life of the prophet Elijah, let us seek to understand something of the nature of the Power he was in relationship with.

> Elijah had experienced the mighty power of God on Mt Carmel when fire had come down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice before the children of Israel, Ahab their king, and the prophets of Baal.
>
> There had been severe drought in the land for several years. Elijah prayed and God answered him with the needed rain.
>
> When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them."
>
> Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. . . into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."
>
> Then he lay down and slept . . . But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" . . . So he ate and drank and lay down again.
>
> Then the angel . . . came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you."

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So he got up and ate, and . . [traveled] forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God . . . where he spent the night in a cave. But the LORD said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too." . . .

As Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain [and] rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper.

(Based on extracts from 1Kings 18,19)

Discussion:

1. Elijah stood confidently before many men on Mt Carmel but he ran away from the threats of one woman. Discuss this puzzling behaviour.
2. Elijah seemed to go from the very heights of experience with God to a state of utter hopelessness. How does his experience reflect our own experiences?
3. Even though Elijah had plenty of evidence of God's power, what was the essence of his prayer under the broom tree?
4. Where was the higher power most evident in this story? Discuss the significance of your answer.
5. What are we looking for from a higher power?

What is God Like?

God is spirit by nature (John 4:24) and, as such, is greater than man (Job 33:12). He alone is eternal, immortal and invisible (1Tim.1:17) yet He is light (1John 1:5). He is all-powerful, mighty and awesome in both power, wisdom, and judgment (Deut.10:17; Job 9:4; 36:5,22). As such, He is the great and holy God, Lord of lords and King of kings - supreme, incorruptible sovereign ruler of the universe and He and His words are true; He is faithful and does what He says (Ps.66:20; 99:9; Prov.30:5; John 3:33; 1Cor.1:9; 10:13).

He is genuinely kind, gracious, good and merciful, (2Chron.30:9; Ps.116:5). He nurtures and protects (Ps.46:1), rescues, saves and gives us victory (Deut.20:4; Ps.68:20; Prov.30:5; Isa.12:2). This is because God is love (1John 4:8) and He loves order and peace (1Cor.14:33). And because He loves us He is also jealous for us, not willing that any perish (Nah.1:2; 2Pet.3:9). What an awesome God.

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What God isn't Like

1. "God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind." (Num.23:19) So God is honest and constant.
2. God is not disordered or the author of confusion. (1Cor.14:33) He is organized and consistent.
3. "For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers." (Heb.6:10) "Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds." (Rev.22:12)
4. God doesn't condemn us. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:17NIV)
5. God is not ashamed of those who have made sacrifices for Him. "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." (Heb.11:16)

Reflection:

1. We have examined a number of Bible verses that reveal who God is and what He is like and not like. Reflect on the following words of David.

   > O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.
   >
   > You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD.
   >
   > You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand! (Ps.139:1-6)

   "Here we have a representation of the unsearchable greatness of God, while we can but be impressed with his intimate knowledge of all our ways, and with the great tenderness expressed for the objects of his creation."

   (EGW, Signs of the Times, August 21, 1884)
2. Share your response to what God is and isn't as revealed in the sections, **What is God Like?** and **What God isn't Like**.
3. Read David's words slowly, phrase by phrase and meditate on the significance of each statement. Be prepared to share your response.
4. What have you learned about the 'unsearchable greatness of God' and His 'great tenderness' for us.

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God's Greater Power:

G -	**Gracious**	The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. (Ps.145:8 NIV)
R -	**Righteous**	The LORD is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness. (Ps.145:17)
E -	**Eternal**	All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen. (1Tim.1:17)
A -	**Awesome**	For the LORD Most High is awesome. He is the great King of all the earth. (Ps.47:2)
T -	**Trustworthy**	Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock. Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you. (Isa.26:4; Ps.37:5)
E -	**Everlasting love**	The LORD said . ., "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself." (Jeremiah 31:3)
R -	**Reliable**	Who among you fears the LORD and obeys his servant? If you are walking in darkness, without a ray of light, trust in the LORD and rely on your God. (Isa.50:10)

P -	**Protector**	God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. (Ps.46:1)
O -	**Orderly**	For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, . . . But be sure that everything is done properly and in order. (1Cor.14:33,40)
W -	**Wise**	For God is so wise and so mighty. All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen. (Job 9:4; Rom.16:27)
E -	**Enduring faithfulness**	Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created. (Ps.119:20)
R -	**Redeemer**	"For I hold you by your right hand . . . Don't be afraid. I am here to help you . . . I am the LORD, your Redeemer. (Isa.41:13-14)

"**How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings**." (Ps.36:7)

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ACCEPTING GOD'S CARE

In our last lesson we explored the nature and character of God and His unsearchable greatness. The Creator of the universe has an intimate knowledge of and an abounding love for each of us. We have come to believe that our only hope for healing is in acknowledging God's greatness and personal interest in us. In response to His immeasurable love and His awesome wisdom and judgement we are compelled by our very nature to respond. As John expresses it, "*We love Him because He first loved us.*" (1John 4:19) This leads us inevitably to the third step on the road to restoration.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

The Process of Acceptance

1. **Admit Our Need** - That's the essential first step - "**We admitted we were powerless over our hurts, habits, addictions, and compulsive behaviours, that our lives had become unmanageable**." When we've done our reality check, we get honest with ourselves and admit our powerlessness. Like Paul, we cry out, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't." (Rom.7:18)

   Discuss:

2. **Believe in God** - "*And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.*" (Heb.11:6) This is the essential second step.

   Discuss:

3. **Trust God** - Trust is essential to accepting any form of assistance. Trust leads to confidence in the one we put our trust in. '*I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?* ' (Ps.56:11). David penned these confident words thousands of years ago but they are as relevant now as they were then. As our trust grows so does our confidence.

   Discuss:

4. **Humbly Submit** - '*So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.'* (1Pet.5:6-7)

   Discuss:

5. **Choose to Hand Over the Problem** - "*Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.*" (Ps.55:22) Jesus says, "*"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*" (Mat.11:28)

   Discuss:

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6. **Respond to His Counsel** - Jesus continues, "*Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.*" (Mat.11:29-30). We need to be open to the Lord's instructions. That's what it means to take His yoke. It means that we are willing to be linked to Him so that we step as He steps. This is a team effort that can only work as we are willing to align our will with His - that is, when we are teachable.

   Discuss:

7. **Put What We Learn into Practice** - After Christ's last meal with His disciples before He was arrested and crucified He gave them some final instructions with practical examples and then told them, *"I have given you an example to follow."* (John 13:15) When we walk with the Lord we learn to keep in step with Him.

   Discuss:

Christ's Example of An Attitude of Ultimate Acceptance

"He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

"Then he returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Couldn't you watch with me even one hour? Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!"

"Then Jesus left them a second time and prayed, "My Father! If this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will be done." When he returned to them again, he found them sleeping, for they couldn't keep their eyes open.

"So he went to pray a third time, saying the same things again. Then he came to the disciples and said, "Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But look—the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Up, let's be going. Look, my betrayer is here!" (Matt.26:39-46)

"Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. (Phil.2:5-8)

"For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone.

"He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

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"He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed." (1Pet.2:21-24)

Discussion:

1. Explore the steps in acceptance that Jesus took so as to rescue us from our hurts, habits, addictions and compulsive behaviours.
2. Consider the one who never sinned but chose to take our guilt, shame and sins to the cross for us so that we could be counted sinless.
3. In view of what we have read, discuss the level of acceptance Jesus had when on the cross He said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)
4. In light of Christ's willingness to accept the consequences of our sins in His body, reflect on the following short statement, "Jesus is the pledge of our acceptance with God." (EGW, Reflecting Christ, p.76)
5. In response to Christ's free offer of salvation we might say, "Oh, it's too good to be true." Explore the beliefs, attitudes and thought patterns that prompt this type of response.
6. Read again the quote from Phil.2:5-8 on the previous page. Respond to the following admonition that proceeds this quote, "*You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*" (Phil.2:5FP)

Accepting God's Care for Us

We have submerged ourselves in the assurances of God's care as expressed through Christ's willing acceptance of the consequences of our failures. But His acceptance of our failures releases us from the burden of guilt and shame and frees us to follow His example with gratitude. In accepting His 'yolk' we align ourselves with His will and accept His help in overcoming those harmful behaviours that so easily beset us. That's what it means to '*turn our lives over to the care of God* '; to accept His will for us and His desire to change our naturally doubting mind into one that completely trusts His forgiveness, consents to His healing and willingly follows His leading.

> "**Christ is the Redeemer of the world. His greatest message to the world was, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "If any man will come after me," he said, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Jesus accepted that cross, with all its humiliation and suffering, that he might make it possible for every member of the human family to follow in his footsteps.**"
>
> (EGW, Review & Herald, December 6, 1898)

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In Summary:

A -	**Admit our failure**	that our lives are out of control - that they are unmanageable. "If we confess our sins . . ." (1John 1:9)
C -	**Consider His greatness**	"It is by virtue of the blood of Christ that the sin-stricken soul can be restored to soundness." (EGW, God's Amazing Grace, p.183)
C -	**Came to believe**	that God didn't send His Son into the world to condemn us but that if we believe in him we will have eternal life.
E -	**Explore His promises**	They enable us to share his divine nature and escape the corruption caused by our faulty human desires. (cf. 2Pet.1:4)
P -	**Pray**	In Gethsemane Jesus told His disciples to pray for strength to withstand temptation. (cf. Luke 22:40) We are advised by Paul to pray constantly. (cf. 1Thes.5:17 RSV)
T -	**Trust**	"When we trust God fully, when we rely upon the merits of Jesus as a sin-pardoning Saviour, we shall receive all the help that we can desire." (EGW, Faith and Works, p.36)

G -	**Give Him our lives**	"If we surrender our lives . . . Whatever may be our situation . . . If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us." (EGW, Gospel Workers, p.263)
O -	**Open the door . . .**	so He can come in. He stands at the door knocking. He desires to come in and calm our doubts and fears and help us clear out the rubbish from our thinking.
D -	**Desire Him**	When we desire to bring glory to God we desire to do His will, and to feed on His every word. (Cf. Isa 26:8; 1Pet.2:2)
'S -	**Seek Him**	God says, "If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me." (Jer.29:13)

C -	**Come to Him**	Jesus invites all who are weary and burdened down with cares to come to Him and receive rest. (Cf. Matt.11:28)
A -	**Ask Him**	This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. (1John 5:14 NIV)
R -	**Receive His help**	God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (Jam.1:12)
E -	**Enjoy**	You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. (1Pet.1:8)

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SERIOUS SOUL SEARCHING

Every year most businesses do an annual stock take, retail stores have sales to get rid of excess stock and accountants get out the years books and do an audit. In the home we find that an annual spring clean is often necessary to clear out old or unwanted items, clean up the accumulated clutter, rearrange things according to priority or aesthetic taste and in general, make things shipshape again. As we leave the winter of our despair and bask in the rays of God's everlasting love it is well for us to assess where we are at and evaluate our motives, values and desires. This is what the 4th Step in the recovery process states.

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

A Bible Example:

When the Jews returned to Jerusalem from their Babylonian captivity things were pretty tough. Nehemiah, King Artaxerxes' cup-bearer, on hearing of their difficulties sought the King's help then headed off to Jerusalem to help in its restoration. After the walls were rebuilt he joined Ezra the priest in helping the people rebuild their lives. For so many years the spiritual needs of the people had been neglected and they had lost sight of their spiritual heritage. Let's read what happened.

> All the people, in a spirit of unity, gathered in the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had given for Israel to obey.
>
> So Ezra brought the Book of the Law before the assembly including men, women and those children who could understand. When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet.
>
> Then Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people chanted, "Amen! Amen!" as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.
>
> From early morning until noon he read aloud to everyone who could understand. Everyone listened closely to the Book of the Law. The Levites instructed the people and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.
>
> Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, "Don't mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the LORD your God." For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, "Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!"
>
> So the people went away to celebrate with great joy because they had heard God's words and understood them. (Extracted a paraphrased from Neh. 8:1-10)

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Discussion:

1. Discuss the attitudes that are evident in the people who had returned to Jerusalem and worked on its restoration.
2. Discuss how a Divine Code of Conduct can provide the basis for a searching and fearless moral inventory.
3. Discuss the advice given by the leaders when the people were saddened, dejected and began weeping. How should we apply this principle to the process of making a moral inventory?
4. After three weeks of serious soul searching the people gathered together again and for three hours stood and listened to the reading of the Law of the Lord then for another three hours "they confessed their sins and worshiped the Lord their God." (Neh.9:3) The prayer that followed (Vs.5-38) reads like a national moral inventory. Discuss.

Getting Serious

There are several points that we can reflect on when considering the 4th step:-

1. We need to be clear on what a moral inventory is. Let's examine what we are looking at when we consider our moral position.
    a. We all hold to certain principles that define the rightness or wrongness of our thoughts and actions. These are our personal moral code, our ethical standard of conduct or values that are based on an innate sense of right and wrong as well as the learned values as expressed in our cultural subset.
    b. Paul gives us an example of this innate sense of right and wrong when he states, "*Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they **instinctively** obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.*" (Rom.2:14,15 emphasis supplied)
    c. This innate sense of right and wrong is implanted within us by our creator, is expanded through a knowledge of divine principles as expressed in God's Word (e.g. the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule) and further exemplified in the character and life of Jesus who is the embodiment of the principle (or law) of love.
    d. In preparing a moral inventory we examine our standing in relation to the innate and learned values that we hold as true.
2. Our inventory or personal stock-take needs to be done thoroughly and fearlessly. This is not something that we rush into or through quickly. It is something which is best done in a quiet place of solitude without the pressure of life responsibility.

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3. We will need the presence and guidance of our heavenly Father to bring us through the process. We need to look at our weaknesses and flaws as well as our strengths and assets. But it isn't a time to beat ourselves up. List no more than 12 flaws.

4. Let's look at the sample checklist below and see one way of doing a moral inventory.

Flaws	Sample Checklist of Flaws and Assets	Assets
Aggressive	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Gentle**
Proud	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Humble**
Dishonest	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Honest**
Greedy	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Sharing**
Hateful	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Loving**
Lazy	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Industrious**
Nagging	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Supportive**
Self-centered	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Caring of others**
Wasteful	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Thrifty**
Withdrawn	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	**Outgoing**

(This sample checklist is based on a larger list and set of 4th Step worksheets available as a PDF file or printout on request. Alternatively, Google 'moral inventory' for a range of tools that can be used. E.g. http://www.isob-bible.org/innerheal/moralinventory.htm)

5. Certainly, we cannot go wrong when we take God's word as the standard by which we evaluate our motives, values and desires.

   a. Let's consider the implications of the following words from the Psalmist. "*Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees! Then I will not be ashamed when **I compare my life with your commands.***" (Ps.119:5-6 emphasis supplied) Is this what a moral inventory entails?

   b. Let's discuss the implications of the words of James, "*But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you **look carefully** into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.*" (Jam. 1:22-25)

      i. What does it mean when it says, "**you are only fooling yourselves**"?

      ii. In what way is denial described in this quote?

      iii. Compare "look carefully" with "searching and fearless" (4th step). In what way are they saying the same thing? In what way are they different?

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Summary:

S -	Submit	“Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.” (Jam.4:8)
E -	Enlist	Enlist the help of the LORD. He says, “For I hold you by your right hand— I, the LORD your God. And I say to you, 'Don't be afraid. I am here to help you.’” (Isa.41:13)
A -	Assess	“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.” (Ps.139:23-24)
R -	Reflect	“Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.” (Phil.4:8)
C -	Come	‘Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."’ (Matt.11:28-30)
H -	Heal	Let’s pray the prayer of King David, "O LORD, have mercy on me. Heal me, for I have sinned against you." (Ps.41:4)

Search Me, O God

Search me, O God, and know my heart today,
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray;
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin, and set me free.

I praise Thee, Lord, for cleansing me from sin;
Fulfill Thy word and make me pure within;
Fill me with fire, where once I burned with shame;
Grant my desire to magnify Thy name.

Lord, take my life, and make it wholly Thine;
Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine;
Take all my will, my passion, self and pride;
I now surrender, Lord, in me abide.

O Holy Ghost, revival comes from Thee;
Send a revival, start the work in me;
Thy Word declares Thou wilt supply our need;
For blessings now, O Lord, I humbly plead.

James E. Orr

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Hope and Healing

ALTERING OUR UNDERSTANDING

The last lesson ended with the words of a song based on Psalm 139:23-24. The first two lines say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart today, Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.” There is one certainty, our thoughts are an open book to God. The psalmist declares, “The LORD knows the thoughts of man” (94:11). There are many examples in the Gospels where Jesus demonstrated the ability to know the thoughts of people He interacted with. One of the most startling examples of this ability is found in John 4.

Let’s read the story:

Jesus, with His disciples, was returning to Galilee from Judea via Samaria. ‘Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"

Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water." . . . .

"Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her. "I don't have a husband," the woman replied. Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband—for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!"

"Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet. . . .” Then Jesus told her, "I AM the Messiah!"

The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?"

(Based on extracts from John 4:1-29)

Discussion:

1. Discuss the extent of God’s knowledge of our thoughts and perceptions as demonstrated in this story.

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2. Explore the possibility that knowing that God knows our inner thoughts can actually liberate us from the prison house of our deeper thoughts, denials and self condemnation.
3. Consider the following statement, meditate on it for a few moments and experience it as if Jesus is speaking directly to you, then discuss your feelings

"IF YOU ONLY KNEW THE GIFT GOD HAS FOR YOU."

The Gift of Understanding:

Early in King Solomon's reign, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and asked him, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!" In responding to God's question, Solomon said, "Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong." (1Kings 3:5,9)

Now that's a request we need to make. God responded and gave Solomon what he had asked for plus more. He has the reputation of being the wisest man who ever lived. Let's read the following verses from the Psalms so that we can find the way to get understanding.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding." (Ps.111:10NIV)

"I will pursue your commands, for you expand my understanding." (Ps.119:32)

"Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart." (V.34)

"Your hands have made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments." (V. 73 NKJV)

"Yes, I have more insight [understanding] than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your laws." (V. 99)

"Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life." (V.104)

"Give discernment to me, your servant; then I will understand your laws." (V.125)

"The teaching of your word gives light, so even the simple can understand." (V.130)

"Your laws are always right; help me to understand them so I may live." (V.144)

Discussion:

1. What action words are used in these verses to describe how we can develop understanding? Discuss the implications of each action.
2. Reflect on the place of 'a willingness to be taught' and 'discernment' in the altering of our understanding.

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The Source of Understanding:

Let's consider the advice of the wisest man that ever lived (Prov. 2:2-10).

> "Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures.
>
> "Then you will understand what it means to fear the LORD, and you will gain knowledge of God. For the LORD grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
>
> "He grants a treasure of common sense to the honest. He is a shield to those who walk with integrity. He guards the paths of the just and protects those who are faithful to him.
>
> "Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will find the right way to go. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy."

Discussion:

1. Jesus made this observation, "That is why I use these parables, For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand." (Matt.13:13) Explore the things that impair our spiritual sight and hearing for example:
   a. The glasses of our world view.
   b. The deafening noise of worldly distractions.
   c. The darkness of discouragement.
   d. The double deafness of denial and doubt.
2. Solomon tells us that wisdom, common sense, insight knowledge and understanding are like hidden treasure. Where can this treasure be found? Consider these words from Psalm 119:111 and 162 and then share your experience.
   a. "Your laws are my treasure; they are my heart's delight."
   b. "I rejoice in your word like one who discovers a great treasure."
3. Ponder these statements:
   a. "Nothing is so calculated to enlarge the mind and strengthen the intellect as the study of the Bible. . . As the mind is brought to the study of God's Word, the understanding will enlarge and the higher powers will develop for the comprehension of high and ennobling truth."
      (EGW, 1 Mind Character and Personality, p. 93)
   b. "**Understanding means obedience to God's commandments**."
      (EGW, Christ Object Lessons, p.112)

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Summary Acrostic:

U -	Unless we are teachable	Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless you . . . become like little children" (Matt.18:3) That is, we are willing to learn from the Master teacher.
N -	No time like the present	For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you."*Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation. (2Cor.6:2)
D -	Don't doubt - hear Him	When Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection He said, "Why are your hearts filled with doubt?" 'Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.' (Luke 24:38,45)
E -	Early morning devotions	O God, you are my God; I earnestly [early KJV] search for you. My soul thirsts for you. (Ps.63:1)
R -	Reason with God	"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isa.1:18 NIV)
S -	Search for wisdom	I searched everywhere, determined to find wisdom and to understand the reason for things. I was determined to prove to myself that wickedness is stupid and that foolishness is madness. (Ecc.7:25)
T -	Trust God	Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. (Prov.3:5)
A -	Acknowledge	In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. (Prov.3:6-7)
N -	Neglect not the study of the Word	Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. (2Tim.2:15)
D -	Discover the essentials	I realized that no one can discover everything God is doing under the sun. Not even the wisest people discover everything, no matter what they claim. (Ecc.8:17)

May my cry come before you, O LORD;

give me understanding according to your word.

(Ps.119:169 NIV)

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Hope and Healing

Dealing with Destructive Desires

In approaching this topic, we first need to understand what is meant by the word 'desire'. It is a conscious impulse or strong feeling, a longing or craving to have an object, experience, attainment or event. Desires can be worthy such as a desire for understanding. But our attention for this lesson is on those desires or cravings or addictions that can damage or destroy our happiness, our relationships, our health our future and our peace.

Let's read about two sources of desire identified in Galatians:

"So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

"The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. . .

"When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. . .

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there." (Extracts from 5:16–24)

The Two sources are:

a. **Our Human Nature** - the Greek word translated '*sinful nature*' in the 'New Living Translation' quoted above literally means '*flesh*' or '*the body*' and, by extension, '*the animal or physical nature*' of humanity which is subject to powerful drives.

   i. There are several basic drives related to survival - **sustenance**, **sleep**, **sex**, **and self-preservation**. These powerful drives have a biological basis for their function. They are of the '*flesh*', that is of '*the body* '. They operate from the neuro-hormonal centre deep within the brain and are subject to variation. These powerful drives strongly influence our desires and, if left unchecked, can result in negative consequences.

   ii. There are other drives that emanate from our inherited personality traits. Currently, there are five major personality traits that are recognized by psychologists. They are expressed in bipolar dimensions which do colour our desires. These five traits are briefly outlined in the following table.

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The Big Five Personality Traits		
Curious, imaginative ← Creative, flexible	**Openness**	→ Conforms, crude, rigid Realistic, insensitive
Organized, reliable ← Ambitious, careful	**Conscientiousness**	→ Lazy, negligent Impulsive, fun-loving
Sociable, optimistic ← Outgoing, affectionate	**Extraversion**	→ Quiet, task-oriented Reserved, shy, aloof
Gentle, forgiving ← Trusting, caring	**Agreeableness**	→ Self-centered, irritable Manipulator, vengeful
Emotional, worrier ← Nervous, insecure	**Neuroticism**	→ Calm, relaxed Hardy, composed

iii. In addition, we learn personality characteristics from family, peers and society at large become part of who we are. The interaction of our basic drives with our inherent and learned personality traits has a significant impact on our desires.

b. **The second source is the Holy Spirit** - Jesus promised His followers the Holy Spirit, the one who He declares is our Advocate (Helper, Comforter, Intercessor), even the Spirit of Truth. The Holy Spirit's role is to point out where we are going wrong, show us the right path and give us the wisdom to make right choices (see John 14:16-17; 16:7-8,13). Our Heavenly Father is more than willing to "give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Luke 11:13).Paul says that "the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness" (Rom.8:26)

Discussion:

1. Explore those attributes of human nature that are influencing your desires. Discuss the implications of this influence in your own life.
2. Compare the consequences resulting from the desires of our physical nature with those that come as the fruitage of Holy Spirit prompted desires as outlined in the reading from Galatians on the previous page.
3. Evaluate your personality traits and discover your strengths and weaknesses.
4. Share how family, peers, society and the media have influenced your desires.
5. How true is this? - "Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions." (James 1:14-15) .

Replacing Our Destructive Desires

There are many who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. **Our first work is with the heart**. EGW, Christ's Object Lessons

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1. **Nailing our Desires to His Cross** - The last verse in the Bible reading on page one says, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.” (Gal.5:24) How can we do this? Earlier in his letter to the Galatians Paul said, “My old self has been crucified with Christ.” (2:20) Even as Christ sacrificed Himself, so we are called to give ourselves (that is surrender our will) to God as “a living and holy sacrifice” so that he can transform us into a new person by changing the way we think. (Rom.12:1,2)

2. **You Must be Born Again** - This is what Jesus told Nicodemus who said, “How are these things possible?” (John 3:8-9) It is by believing in Jesus and what He has done for us that we can be born again, that is, “born of the spirit”. Note this statement:

   “The Saviour said, "Except a man be born from above," **unless he shall receive a new heart, new desires, purposes, and motives, leading to a new life**, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3, margin.” (EGW, Steps to Christ, p.18)

   Note that a new heart involves new desires, new purposes and new motives. So what we need is a new heart, that is a new mind, drives and desires.

3. **Accepting a Heart Transplant** - God is ready to give us a make-over. Note what He says through the prophet Ezekiel, “I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. . . . I will cleanse you of your filthy behavior.” (36:26-27,29)

   Paul puts it this way, “You must have the same attitude [mind] that Christ Jesus had.. . . he humbled himself in obedience to God . . . Dear friends, . . . Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” (Extracts from Phil.2:5-13)

4. **Signing the Consent Form** - Whenever we have to have a surgical procedure we are presented with a range of consent forms to complete. This means we have to exercise our power of choice and agree to the procedure. So with God. He will only proceed with the transformation of our lives as we consent and give Him permission to “Create in [us] a clean heart, [and] renew a loyal spirit within [us].” (Cf. Ps.51:10) “So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. . . and he will lift you up in honor. “ (James 4:7-8,10)

5. **My Commitment:** *I, ... give God permission to remove my stubborn heart with it’s faulty desires and replace it with a responsive heart made like that of my loving, humble and obedient Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

   Signature: . . . . . .

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Discussion:

1. David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.” (Ps.51:10) Discuss the process that brings us to the point of seeking a genuine make-over.
2. We say, “He’s got rocks in his head.” Identify the stubborn rocks that are a problem for us and that we are ready to have removed completely.
3. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. Discuss how being born of the Spirit changes who we are.
4. Meditate on this verse. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1John 3:1)

In Summary

D -	**Delivered**	“For he has rescued [delivered] us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.” (Col.1:13-14)
E -	**Enabled**	“It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us.” (2Cor.1:21-22)
S -	**Spirit-filled**	“The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.” (Rom.8:11)
I -	**Inspired**	“I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Rom.15:13)
R -	**Renewed**	“throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.” (Eph.4:22-24)
E -	**Empowered**	“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence, And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.” (2Pet.1:)
S -	**Signed Up**	Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you. He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.” (Ps.37:5-6)

Step 6: **Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character**.

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Correcting Our Motives and Purposes

In our last lesson, 'Dealing with Destructive Desires', we read the following statement, "The Saviour said, "Except a man be born from above," **unless he shall receive a new heart, new desires, purposes, and motives, leading to a new life**, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3, margin." (EGW, Steps to Christ, p.18). For us to have a new heart we need new desires, purposes and motives. We have considered the problem of our desires in the last lesson and now we will examine the problem of motives and purposes as related concepts.

1. **Motives** are the reason behind an action. They are an expression of our basic human drives, needs, desires and emotions.
   a. Biological motives stem from hunger, thirst, pain, the need to breathe and to rest, and the drives to survive and procreate. Some of these motives can be activated by external stimuli such as the smell of food can make us hungry.
   b. Psychological motives like curiosity, aggression and the need for approval, companionship, security, and success are emotional in nature and arise from an interaction between our perceptions and external stimuli.
   c. Motives can be intrinsic (activated from within us) or extrinsic (activated by triggers outside of us) or a combination of both.
   d. Motives prompted by the spirit include a conviction of right and wrong and that we are answerable for our actions. Jesus said, "And when he [*the Holy Spirit*] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment " (John 16:8 ESV).
   e. According to the social psychology theorist Leon Festinger, humans have two basic motives: the need to be right and the need to feel good about ourselves.
2. **Purposes** are the reason for, or aim of an action - in other words the goal, intention or agenda. Purposes require an act of the will or choice, choices that are largely driven by our motives.

Exploring the Motives and Purposes Behind Our Actions:

1. **Exposing our motives** - "The LORD's light penetrates the human spirit, exposing every hidden motive." (Pro 20:27) "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. "(Ps.119:105) When we the light of God's word shines on our lives it exposes our faulty motives. The wise man said, "People may be pure in their own eyes, but the LORD examines their motives." (Prov.16:2). Even apparently good deeds may be prompted by wrong motives.
2. **Be willing to be exposed** - We could pray David's prayer, "Put me on trial, LORD, and cross-examine me. Test my motives and my heart." (Ps.26:2) Our motives become clear in the light of God's word. We become aware of those motives that God, in His pity and love, desires to give us.

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3. Use the following sample table as a tool to assess the motives behind positive and negative behaviours in your life. Start with the behaviour and work back:

Motive - the 'Why'	Purpose - the 'Aim'	Behaviour - the action

Identify the Motives and Purposes Evident in this Bible Story.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it and took all but the poor of Jerusalem captive, including all the commanders and the best of the soldiers, craftsmen, and artisans—10,000 in all.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives.

"Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon."

Four of the young men chosen were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. But Daniel was determined [**purposed in his heart**] not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.

The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days with only vegetables and water. After ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than those who had been eating the King's food so the attendant fed them only vegetables.

When the training period ended, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. The King was impressed by Daniel and his three friends who he found to be ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom . (compiled from Dan.1 and 2 Kings 24:14)

Discussion:

1. Consider the motives and purposes of the key players in this story, Nebuchadnezzar, Ashpenaz, Daniel and the attendant assigned to the four Hebrews. For further incites read the full story from Daniel 1.

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2. It says that Daniel 'purposed in his heart'. Even though he was a captive with little capacity for the use of free will, he still exercised the power of choice despite the possible consequences. What motivating factors played a part in determining his choice?

3. What was the outcome of Daniel's strategy? Consider the relationship between, motives, purposes, and outcomes.

4. Discuss the following words of David as they relate to the integrity of Daniel. "I know, my God, that you examine our hearts and rejoice when you find integrity there. You know I have done all this with good motives, and I have watched your people offer their gifts willingly and joyously." (1Ch 29:17)

Reflect on Ways to Develop Christ-like Motives

1. **Motivated by love** - When we begin to understand the extent of God's love for us as expressed in the humble and compassionate life of Jesus; when we comprehend the demonstration of God's love for us in Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross (cf. Rom.5:8), "Then Christ will make his home in [our] hearts as [we] trust in him. [Our] roots will grow down into God's love and keep [us] strong. And may [we] have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is".(Eph.3:17-18 adjusted to the 1st person)

2. Paul continues, "May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God." (V.19)

3. "A man lives unto God when he continually recognizes Him as a present Helper . . . [The love of Christ is not a fitful feeling, but a living principle, and it is not only to be expressed in words, but to be lived out in the life, and to be made manifest as an abiding power in the heart]. . . . There are some who think that in matters of practical Christianity, they have a superior intelligence. Whether or not this is so, will be demonstrated by the life-actions. Are they self-centred, **or are they moved by the Holy Spirit of truth and righteousness**? Religion is to become a living, active principle. **The one all-absorbing motive of the true Christian is to give an expression of the goodness and the love of Christ**".

   (EGW, Bible Training School, *True Christianity* 1908 and bracketed section, Bible Echo, May 28, 1894])

4. **Expressing Christ's good purposes** - "For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan [purpose - *NKJV*] from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus." (2Tim.1:9) Right from the beginning God's purpose was for us to live Holy lives patterned after himself. When we chose another path, He didn't cast us off but set in motion His rescue plan. A plan that saw the Son of God, Jesus, demonstrate the ultimate meaning of love.

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5. **The motive of purpose** - "If you make God your strength, you may, under the most discouraging circumstances, attain a height and breadth of Christian perfection which you hardly think it possible to reach. Your thoughts may be elevated, you may have noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, and purposes of action which shall raise you above all sordid motives."
(EGW, Counsels on Health, p.384)

6. "Nothing takes so strong a hold upon the affections, nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives of action, nothing exerts so potent an influence upon the life, and gives so great firmness and stability to the character, as the religion of Christ. It leads its possessor ever upward, inspiring him with noble purposes, teaching him propriety of deportment, and imparting a becoming dignity to every action." (EGW, God's Amazing Grace, p.206).

In Conclusion

M -	Moved by the Holy Spirit	Your heart must be moved, your soul touched, your reason and intellect awakened, by the Spirit of God; the holy principles laid down in His word will give light to the soul. EGW, Medical Ministry p.99
O -	Obey	God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. (1Pet.1:2)
T -	Trust	Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. (Prov.3:5)
I -	Intentionally Internalize	Obey my commands and live! Guard my instructions as you guard your own eyes. Tie them on your fingers as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart. (Prov.7:2-3) Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart. (Prov.3:3)
V -	Values, positive	A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. (Matt.12:35)
E -	Experience	May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. (Eph.3:19)
S -	Selfless service	For the Kingdom of God is . . . living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too. (Rom.14:17-18)

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Building Better Behaviour

In the last lesson we learnt that "nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives" or inspires us with noble purposes, or teaches us correct behavior, or imparts a sense of self-worth as the "religion of Christ." (see EGW, God's Amazing Grace, p.206). But what does the author of 'God's Amazing Grace' mean by the "religion of Christ"? The following excerpts show us what the author means.

> "The **religion of Christ** reveals itself as a vitalizing, pervading principle, a living, working, spiritual energy. When the heart is opened to the heavenly influence of truth and love, these principles will flow forth again like streams in the desert, causing fruitfulness to appear where now are barrenness and dearth."
>
> (Christian Service, p.106)

> "Love must be the principle of action. Love is the underlying principle of God's government in heaven and earth, and it must be the foundation of the Christian's character. . . . This is the **religion of Christ**. " (Christ's Object Lessons, p.49-50)

> "The **religion of Christ** is sincerity itself. Zeal for God's glory is the motive implanted by the Holy Spirit; and only the effectual working of the Spirit can implant this motive. Only the power of God can banish self-seeking and hypocrisy." (Desire of Ages, p.409)

> "To have the religion of Christ means that you have absolutely surrendered your all to God, and consented to the guidance of the Holy Spirit."
>
> (Messages to Young People, p.30)

> "The religion of Christ will lead us to do all the good possible, to both high and low, rich and poor, happy and oppressed. But especially will it lead to the manifestation of kindness in our own family. It will be manifested by acts of courtesy and love to father and mother, husband, wife, and child. We are to look to Jesus, to catch His Spirit, to live in the light of His goodness and love, and to reflect His glory upon others. " (My Life Today, p.200)

So now we can see that in surrendering to God and accepting the guidance of the Holy Spirit our heart comes under the influence of love and truth. This results in the development of a loving and caring Christ-like character marked by 'acts of courtesy and love.

This is what **Step 7** is all about. It's the step where we invite God to work on our faulty motives, purposes and behaviour. Read this step and the associated scripture and discuss how a response to the '*religion of Christ*' described above can be a part of taking this step.

Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Scripture: "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor." (Jam.4:10 NLT)

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A Parable about building

In closing His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), Jesus uses the following illustration.

"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock.

“But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash." (Matt.7:24-27)

“Christ set forth the principles of His kingdom, and showed them to be the great rule of life. To impress the lesson He adds an illustration. It is not enough, He says, for you to hear My words. By obedience you must make them the foundation of your character. Self is but shifting sand. If you build upon human theories and inventions, your house will fall. By the winds of temptation, the tempests of trial, it will be swept away. But these principles that I have given will endure. Receive Me; build on My words.” (EGW, The Desire of Ages, p.314)

Discussion

1. Discuss the difference between ‘listening’ and ‘hearing’.
2. Scan the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7 and discover the underlying principles of Christ’s Kingdom.

So Let Us Build

1. **What are we planning to build with our lives?** - Our plan is made up of our desires and purposes. Based on these, what type of building are we planning? Could it be a mansion of self-glorification or a hovel of low self-esteem, a pleasure resort of self-gratification or a hotel of addictive behaviours, or could it be something better, a temple to the glory of God. And what better plan than one prepared by the creator of the universe who told Moses when he was about to build the Tabernacle in the wilderness, “"Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you”. (Heb.8:5; cf. Ex.25:40) “God expects us to build characters in accordance with the pattern set before us. . .” (EGW, Child Guidance, p.165) We can be assured that God has a clear plan for our well being because he says, “I know the plans I have for you, . . . They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jer.29:11) God’s plan was to give His Son as our substitute so we can have hope in this present world and a future in His promised kingdom. The Psalmist affirms this fact when he says, “But the LORD's plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken.” (Ps.33:11)

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2. **The Master Craftsman** - "Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain." (Ps.127:1 NIV)

3. **We need a solid foundation** - "Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself." (Eph.2:20)

    a. The **cornerstone** is Christ, the solid rock. "In our character building we must build on Christ. He is the sure foundation—a foundation which can never be moved. The tempest of temptation and trial cannot move the building which is riveted to the Eternal Rock" (Child Guidance, p.166)

    b. The **aggregate** is the apostles and prophets

    c. The **reinforcement** that holds the foundation together is God's law of love, "the foundation of the Christian's character." (Christ's Object Lessons, p.49-50)

    d. The **cement** is the Holy Spirit - "Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace." (Eph.4:3)

    e. We are **the sand** - As we have read, "Self is but shifting sand". But when we are founded on the rock, Christ Jesus, mixed with the aggregate of the apostles and prophets, reinforced by the principles of God's law of love and cemented together by the Holy Spirit, we have a solid foundation for the construction of a sound character.

4. **Protective walls** - A house that will withstand the storms of life needs solid walls.

    a. "We are to lay brick by brick, adding grace to grace, finding our weak points and correcting them in accordance with the directions given. . . In our character building, cracks are often seen. Unless these defects are remedied, the house will fall when the tempest of trial beats upon it." (Child Guidance, p.165)

    b. Paul writes, "We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you . . . are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit." (Eph.2:20-22) We do not stand alone. We have the stabilizing support of each other as we are integrated into the "Temple of the Lord".

    c. In another frequently used metaphor, Paul states that "We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other." (Rom.12:5; cf.1Cor.12:12-27;Eph.5:30)

    d. The wall is further strengthened when it is reinforced with the law of love that reaches up from the solid foundation built upon Christ, the apostles and prophets, and spreads out and binds the members together in an unmovable body.

    e. Finally, as in the foundation, the Holy Spirit unites us in bonds of peace.

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5. **Outfitting** - Paul lists the following adornments for our character building - compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, willingness to forgive, and drapes of love (see Col.3:12-15). "God . . . desires each child of His to build a noble character, by the doing of pure, noble deeds, that in the end he may present a symmetrical structure, a fair temple, honored by man and God." (Child Guidance, p.165)

Summary

B -	Base	our life on the solid Rock. Christ Jesus is the base, the foundation for our character development.
U -	Uphold	His teachings"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves." (James 1:22)
I -	Inculcate	by repeatedly reviewing Christ's teachings which can instil new attitudes, motives, purposes and habits in our life to replace the old ones.
L -	Live it	"For to me, living means living for Christ, . . . It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Phil.1:21; Gal.2:20)
D -	Delight	"I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart." (Ps.40:8 NKJV); "I will delight in your decrees and not forget your word." (Ps. 119:1

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REPAIRING RELATIONSHIPS - 1

After realizing that building character on the shifting sands of self-will has dangerous consequences, we have chosen to follow the Divine pattern and build on the solid foundation of Christ, the solid rock. Reinforced by the Love of God and cemented together by the Holy Spirit, we are being built a Temple to the glory of God.

Another aspect of character development is the role of healthy relationships. "We are all woven together in the great web of humanity, and whatever we can do to benefit and uplift others will reflect in blessing upon ourselves. The law of mutual dependence runs through all classes of society." (EGW, Patriarchs and Prophets 534, 535) In our last lesson, we saw that we find stability in bonded relationships with others. We also noted this statement, "In our character building, cracks are often seen. Unless these defects are remedied, the house will fall when the tempest of trial beats upon it." (Child Guidance, p.165) In our past, we may have harmed others or been harmed by them resulting in fractured relationships. Such circumstances are damaging to our personal development and health, and need rectification where this is possible. This is what the necessary 8th step is about.

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Understanding our Actions

In Series 1, Lesson 10 we examined three areas - material, moral and spiritual wrongs - in which we may have hurt others as well as ourselves. Many times our hurtful behaviour comes as a reactive response to the unkind or thoughtless words and acts of others. We are all too ready to make a list of these wrongs but are we willing to make one of our own hurtful words and actions directed toward others? Note this statement:-

> *Every act, every word, is a seed that will bear fruit. Every deed of thoughtful kindness, of obedience, or of self-denial, will reproduce itself in others, and through them in still others. So every act of envy, malice, or dissension is a seed that will spring up in a "root of bitterness" (Heb. 12:15), whereby many shall be defiled. And how much larger number will the "many" poison.*
>
> (EGW, Christ Object Lessons p.85)

Our words and actions (our behaviour) are like seeds that have been released by our desires, motives, and purposes. They will have a positive or negative affect on the recipients even as the words and actions of others have spawned reactive responses, even 'roots of bitterness', in our own hearts. Unfortunately, souring relationships can develop from seeds that come from multiple sources making matters even more complicated. This is the dynamics of family feuds.

In the Bible story that follows we will see the dynamics that have contributed to and resulted in a breakdown of relationships. In the next lesson, we will consider some of the steps taken to bring about a healing of the relationship.

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The Troublesome Twins (Extracted from Gen. 25-27)

Isaac, the son of Abraham, and his wife, Rebekah, were childless. Isaac prayed, the LORD answered, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. But the children struggled with each other in her womb. The LORD told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son." They named the first Esau and the second Jacob.

As the boys grew up, Esau was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. Isaac loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. He said, "I'm starved! Give me some of that stew!"

"All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

"Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?" So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

At the age of forty, Esau married two wives: Judith and Basemath. They made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.

When Isaac was old and going blind he called for Esau and said, “Go and hunt some wild game for me. Prepare my favorite dish, and bring it here for me to eat. Then I will pronounce the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son, before I die."

Rebekah overheard what Isaac had said to his son. She called Jacob and said, “my son, listen to me. Do exactly as I tell you.” So Rebekah hatched a scheme to trick Isaac into blessing Jacob rather than Esau. The deception worked and Jacob received the blessing.

Then Esau returned from the hunt, prepared a meal and took it to his father. He said, "Sit up, my father, and eat my wild game so you can give me your blessing. "But Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" Esau replied, "I’m your son, your firstborn son, Esau."

Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, "Then who just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him just before you came. And yes, that blessing must stand! Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing."

“Jacob has cheated me twice. First he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing.” From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: "I will soon be mourning my father's death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob."

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Discussion:

1. Explore the areas of dysfunctionality in the relationships within this family. Discuss the process that leads to relationship breakdown.
2. To what extent did unresolved issues contribute to the estrangement of these twins?
3. Discuss the role the parents played in the breakdown of the relationship between Jacob and Esau
4. Share or consider your own experience of soured relationships within your own family, associates or community.

Harming Others Harms Self

Newton's 3rd Law of motion states, "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." Those who use firearms know very well that when a gun is fired and the projectile is propelled toward its target, there is a sometimes painful kick back and the kickback occurs before the target is hit. This same principle applies also to our interactions with others. We may fire off a hurtful projectile but we'll experience the bruising kick back first. As well, our projectile may miss the target or be absorbed by the armament surrounding it leaving us the one carrying the consequences. Worse still, the firing mechanism may malfunction and we could have the whole thing blow up in our face.

Reflect on the following statements:

> "We should reason and reflect, carefully marking the relation between cause and effect. When this is practiced, there will be, on the part of many, greater thoughtfulness and care in regard to their words and actions, that they may fully answer the purpose of God in their creation."
>
> (EGW, Testimonies Vol.4, p.548)

> "What harm is wrought in the family circle by the utterance of impatient words, for the impatient utterance of one leads another to retort in the same spirit and manner. Then come words of retaliation, words of self-justification, and it is by such words that a heavy, galling yoke is manufactured for your neck; for all these bitter words will come back in a baleful harvest to your soul." (EGW, Adventist Home, p. 439)

> "Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. . . like Esau, who traded his birthright as the firstborn son for a single meal." Heb. 12:15-16

> It is a wonderful and grand fact that in the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unerring certainty. The seed sown will produce a harvest of its kind. So it is in human nature. . . . If human beings would consider that they are making their own harvest, they would be careful what seed they sow. (EGW, Manuscript Releases, Vol.3 pp. 342-343)

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Reflections:

1. Reflect on the damage that we have suffered at our own hand as a consequence of the attitude, motives and purposes behind our behaviour towards others.
2. Let's take a few moments to reflect on just one such situation and then complete an analysis using the sample table below.

Person	Relation-ship	My Wrongdoing	Effects on others	Effects on me

In Revision

W	Write down	By making a list of all those we have harmed we take the first step toward making amends.
I	Introspection	Self analysis is the focus of Step 4. It advises us to test and examine our ways, to make a searching and fearless inventory of ourselves.
L	Loose	Loose the bands of bitterness that have poisoned our relationships. Experience the freedom it brings.
L	Live to love	"Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ." (Eph.5:2)
I	Intensional	"You have tested my thoughts and examined my heart . . . I am determined not to sin in what I say." (Ps.17:3)
N	Nurture	Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. (1Pet.3:8)
G	Grow in grace	But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. (2Pet.3:18 NIV)

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REPAIRING RELATIONSHIPS - 2

As we have seen, the law of cause and effect, of action and reaction is unmistakably active in our personal relationships. We have identified areas where our attitudes, words, and actions may have hurt others as well as ourselves. After careful consideration we have made a list of those we have harmed, we have released the bands of bitterness that have blocked our relationships and intentionally chosen the path of love. This forms a foundation on which our relationships can be restored.

These words of Paul are relevant for us who are working on repairing our damaged relationships. He says, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." (Eph.4:31-32)

Learn to accommodate

"Practice patient tenderness with the faults of others.--Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and when His love reigns in the heart, we shall follow His example. If we keep uppermost in our minds the unkind and unjust acts of others, we shall find it impossible to love them as Christ has loved us; for there are few persons who do not on close acquaintance reveal unamiable [*unattractive*] traits of character. Even the best of us have these unlovely traits; and in selecting friends we should choose those who will not be driven away from us when they learn that we are not perfect. Mutual forbearance is called for. We should love and respect one another notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot help seeing; for this is the Spirit of Christ. Humility and self-distrust should be cultivated, and a patient tenderness with the faults of others. This will kill out all narrowing selfishness and make us large-hearted and generous." (EGW, Signs of the Times Mar. 5, 1885; also Pastoral Ministry, p.95)

"To be human is to make mistakes. Hopefully our journey has led us to the point where we can readily admit mistakes and accept ourselves for being imperfect. WE must also learn not to judge others but accept them for who they are, not our vision of who they should be."

(http://esoberbuddy.com/home/spiritual_principles_of_the_12_steps)

The author of Hebrews advises us to "Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, . . . Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. . ." (12:14-15). This resonates with the following pithy statement from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

" When I stopped living in the problem and began living in the answer, the problem went away."

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Seek a Positive Outcome

Take this well known Bible story as an example (based on Gen. 37-50):

Jacob had twelve sons but 17-year-old Joseph was his favourite. This favouritism made Joseph's brothers jealous. To make matters worse, Joseph had two dreams that suggested that Joseph would rule over his parents and siblings. When they heard his dreams his brothers envied and hated him.

Jacob sent Joseph to check how things were going with the brothers who had taken the flocks to distant pastures. When they saw Joseph coming some of them suggested they kill him. Instead, they eventually stripped his multi-coloured coat off him and sold him to slave traders. Then they deceived their father into believing that Joseph had been killed by wild beasts.

Joseph ended up in Egypt as a trusted slave in Potiphar's house. Potiphar's wife took a liking to him and tried to seduce him. When he resisted he was falsely accused and thrust into prison where he languished for several years. After interpreting some prisoner's dreams, he successfully interpreted a dream of Pharaoh. Because of this, he was made responsible for preparing Egypt for a severe famine predicted in the dream.

During the famine, things got really bad for Jacob and his family. Jacob heard that Egypt had grain so he sent ten of his sons to purchase supplies. When they arrived, they bowed before Joseph with their faces to the ground. Joseph recognized them but they didn't recognize him. He accused them of spying and imprisoned them.

After three days he told them that he would keep one of them as a prisoner, the others would return to their home with provisions but they were to come back and bring Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin. This troubled the brothers and Joseph heard them say, "Clearly we are being punished because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his anguish when he pleaded for his life, but we wouldn't listen. That's why we're in this trouble." They were astonished to find their money in their sacks when they arrived home.

Eventually, they had to return to Egypt to get more supplies and, reluctantly, Jacob allowed Benjamin to go with them. Again, Joseph tested them and, when he was sure they were changed men, he said to them, ""I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. But don't be upset, and don't be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives."

Joseph arranged for his family to come down to Egypt where Jacob eventually died. His brothers thought he may now take revenge. They offered to be his slaves but Joseph said, " "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people." So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

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Discussion:

1. If possible, read Genesis 44; 45:1-8 and 50:15-21 to get the full story. Discuss the dynamics within this family and the long-lasting scars inflicted by bonds of bitterness.
2. Why did Joseph hide his identity so long? And in the end, why did he become so emotional?
3. How long does it take to rebuild complete trust in a relationship?
4. How does the statement in the box at the bottom of page 1 relate to Joseph's experience?
5. Discuss the factors that brought about relational healing between Joseph and his brothers. Can some of these factors be useful to us?

Healing without Hurting

The **9th Step** says: **Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**

There are so many factors that damage relationships so the approach taken will vary according to the background of the problem, but there are essential principles that we need to consider:

1. **Be Honest** - but with integrity. King David made this statement, "May integrity and honesty protect me, for I put my hope in you." (Ps.25:21)Sometimes 'honesty' can hurt. So, in making amends, let us be careful to avoid causing further hurt.
2. **Deal Gently** - Jeremiah pleaded, "So correct me, LORD, but please be gentle. Do not correct me in anger, for I would die." (10:24) Paul's advice is, "Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love." (Eph.4:2)
3. **Act with Loving Kindness** - Love needs to be genuine. Paul says, "Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them." (Rom.12:9) John adds, "Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other." (1John 4:11)
4. **Speak with Understanding** - Solomon said, "Wise words come from the lips of people with understanding," (Prov.10:13) A sensible person is respected because he/she knows when to speak and when to keep quiet. (Cf. Prov.11:12; 13:15) James says, "If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom." (James 3:13)
5. **Give it Time** - Don't rush things. Take it step by step. Be patient. In the following text, Paul tells us where patience comes from. He says, "May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus." (Rom.15:5) It takes time to regain the trust of the person who has been hurt. Remember how long it took Joseph and his brothers to have complete trust.

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6. **Accept the other person and their current feelings** - It is not our job to change the way the other party thinks or feels. The sentiments of the serenity prayer speak well to this point.

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change
Courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to know the difference.

In Summary

R	Respect	Relationships are built on mutual respect for the right of the other to make choices for themselves.
E	Expect nothing	Unrealistic expectations can become demands, and demands lead to enslavement. Rather, be ready to accept unexpected positive responses.
L	Love selflessly	Love as Christ loves. Our love needs to be genuine, seeking sincerely to meet the needs of others.
A	Acknowledge	Honestly admit our part in the relationship break-down. Then, by God's grace and power, seek to correct our short comings.
T	Take the Time	And make the time. We need to be patient in restoring a broken relationship. We also need to make time available for the restoration. Be available.
I	Interact	Listen carefully without prejudice. Respond gently and with compassion. Seek to understand.
O	Openness	Be receptive. Value the advice of qualified Christian relational counselors where such are available.
N	No-nonsense	We aren't playing games. A simple, genuine, no-nonsense approach that accepts people where they are and offers genuine intentions in return.
S	Sacrifice	Sometimes it requires real sacrifice. That's how it was with God. He made the ultimate sacrifice in giving His son to draw us back into relationship with Him.

The Law of Mutual Dependence

"We are all woven together in the great web of humanity, and whatever we can do to benefit and uplift others will reflect in blessing upon ourselves. The law of mutual dependence runs through all classes of society."

(EGW, 1 Mind, Character and Personality p.267)

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LOVING TO LIVE, LIVING TO LOVE

A lawyer asked Jesus this question, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” (Matt.22:36 NKJV) His answer is drawn from Deuteronomy where it says, “And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.” (6:5; Matt.22:37) and then, quoting from Leviticus, he added, “A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'” (19:18; Matt.22:39) In these short statements, Jesus presents to us the essentiality of love. It is the foundation principle of God’s character and government. Jesus says, “The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (V.40)

Understanding what Love is

The Greek word translated love in the verses quoted above is ‘agape’. This word conveys the idea of affection, goodwill, benevolence and brotherly love (Strong’s Lexicon G26). It is used to describe the covenant love of God for humans as well as their reciprocal love for Him. It also extends to the caring love one has for others. It has been said that ‘agape’ is love because of what it does, not because of how it feels. It is doing what is in the best interest of others (and even self) irrespective of our feelings.

The following quotes help us understand this concept.

> “The love of Christ is not a fitful feeling, but a living principle, which is to be made manifest as an abiding power in the heart. . . .”
>
> “ All that we do should flow from a deep, abiding principle of love,--a principle that is after the similitude of Christ, who is love and light and peace.”
>
> (EGW, Reflecting Christ, p. 345 and Review and Herald, March 27, 1900)

Paul’s words help us understand what this type of love means when he describes God’s love for us. He writes, “But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” (Rom. 5:8) This is a principle with a purpose which, when implanted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, motivates us to live lives of love.

Discuss:

1. Tease out the concept of ‘Love’ as a ‘living principle’. Discuss the place of principles in our decision-making processes.
2. Revisit the first page of lesson 8, series 2 and discover what is the foundation of Christian character.
3. Jesus said, “This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.” (John 15:12-13) Discuss this command in the light of Rom. 5:8 quoted above.
4. Read John 15: 5-11, then discuss the concepts of love as an abiding principle and a state of being.
5. Discuss Paul’s comments in Rom.12:1-10 as they relate to living lives of love.

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Defining Love (1 Cor. 13:1-7)

"If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

"If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing.

"If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

"It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."

Reflect:

1. Consider the implications of the 'if' statements above and their impact on how we should live our lives.
2. The many characteristics of love in the passage above are summarized in the table to the right. How well do they reflect our own perceptions of love?
3. Contemplate what the world would be like if such attributes were reflected in all our relationships and interactions.
4. If the 'is nots' and 'does nots' are not an expression of love, what are they an expression of?

LOVE	**is**	patient, kind, tolerant, humble, compassionate, steadfast, consistent, trusting, hopeful, enduring, tenacious, honest, polite
	does	rejoice in truth
	isn't	jealous, rude, proud, vindictive, angry, irritable
	doesn't	boast, gloat, demand, enjoy evil, hold grudges

Loving to Live

In circumstances somewhat similar to the one mentioned in the opening paragraph of this lesson, Luke adds a significant addition to the dialogue. After repeating the command to love God wholeheartedly and to love our neighbour as ourselves, Jesus adds this statement,"Do this and you will live!" (Luke 10:28) In saying this, Jesus is alluding to a statement in Deuteronomy where it says, "The LORD your God will change your heart and the hearts of all your descendants, so that you will love him with all your heart and soul and so you may live!" (30:6)

The fact is, we have inherited a fatal congenital condition — a hardened rebellious heart. So, what we need is a change of heart - a heart transplant. The Lord says, "I will take away [your] stony, stubborn heart and give [you] a tender,

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responsive heart." (Ezek.11:19) If we consent to Him working in our lives, He'll take away the 'is nots' and the 'does nots' that fail to beat to the rhythm of His love. He says, "O my son, give me your heart." (Prov.23:26) "To this call we must readily answer, "My father, take my heart, such as it is, and make it such as it should be; take possession of it, and set up [your] throne in it."" (Matthew Henry, Commentary on Proverbs 23)

Jesus said, "If you love me, obey my commandments." (John 14:15) And a little later he said, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them." (V.23) For God to reign and have authority in our hearts we will gladly accept the conditions of His covenant of love with us. He says, " I will put My law in [your] minds, and write it on [your] hearts; and I will be [your] God, and [you] shall be My people." (Heb.8:10; cf. Jer.31:33)

The first four of the Ten Commandments explain what it means to love the Lord with all our heart, mind and strength. To give him our undivided loyalty and respect. To honor his name above all names and remember that He is creator of all that is, animate and inanimate. We do not really 'live' until we come to wholeheartedly love God.

Explore the concept: Loving to Live

Living to Love 1John 4:7–12, 16-21

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. . . Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

We love each other because he loved us first. If someone says, "I love God," but hates his brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?

And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their brothers and sisters.

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Discuss:

1. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35) In light of this statement and the reading from 1 John 4, what is the purpose for living? Discuss.
2. Jesus also said, “Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.” (Luke 6:35-36) Explore together what it means to love as God loves.
3. Consider the alternative as expressed in the statement - ‘Life without love is lifeless’. Discuss the implications of a loveless life for physical and mental wellbeing.
4. Compare these statements - “ But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression (is perfected) in us.” (1John 4:12) and “But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matt.5:48)
5. Explore the concept of ‘Living to love’. How do the principles expressed in the last six of the Ten Commandments help us understand this concept?

In Conclusion:

L	Love	“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
I	Imparted	“Let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.” (1 John 4:7)
F	Filled	“For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.” (Rom.5:5)
E	Experienced	“May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.” (Eph.3:19)

“The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.” (EGW, God’s Amazing Grace, p.276)

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Hope and Healing

ONE WITH HIM

The Eleventh of the **12 Steps** says, "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." The purpose of this step is twofold even as the process is twofold.

1. Firstly, through this step we are seeking to develop a more meaningful and personal relationship with our Lord. A ***One with Him*** relationship.
2. Secondly, we seek the means whereby we can begin to live as He intended for us to live. The way to live ***One with Him***.

These two purposes can be achieved through the combining of two processes - prayer and meditation.

1. **Prayer - a *One with Him* relationship**. "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him." (EGW, Steps to Christ, p.93)
2. **Meditation** - is an act of contemplation and reflection, the way to a ***One with Him*** lifestyle. "The great and essential knowledge is the knowledge of God and His Word. . . . We will grow in grace just in proportion as we depend upon and appreciate the teaching of the Word of God, and habitually meditate upon divine things." (EGW, That I May Know Him, p.193 - edited into the first person)

   "The contemplation of the love of God, manifested in the gift of his Son for the salvation of fallen men, will stir the heart and arouse the powers of the soul as nothing else will. . . . If we meditate upon the love of God, all our habits will indicate that we are preserved in a well-balanced, healthful condition, and our spiritual powers will increase as we exercise them in faith and prayer, and active service for God." (EGW, The Review and Herald, January 7, 1890)

Longing for a 'One with Him' relationship

How many of us have spent sleepless nights dreaming about that elusive longed for special relationship. David expressed it this way. "I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night." (Ps.63:6) Now David isn't dreaming about some fair maiden, he is speaking about God, his God. The one and only God of whom he says, "Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how I praise you." (V.3)

Another Psalmist puts it this way, "As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?" (Ps.42:1-2)

"Oneness, harmony, unity of spirit with the Saviour,--these are the signs by which Christians may be distinguished. Thus they show to the world that Christ is the Son of the living God, and that He is able to give salvation, even eternal life, to all who believe on Him." (EGW, Pacific Union Recorder, July 3, 1902)

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Seeking that 'One with Him' Relationship (Extracts from John 17:9-23)

Jesus prayed, "My prayer is . . . for those you have given me, because they belong to you. . . Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are.

"I have given them your word. . . Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. . . . And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

"I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one.

"I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me."

Take Time to Meditate:

1. On Belonging to God - "You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body." (1Cor.6:19-20)
2. Consider the purpose of the Divine/human relationship. Jesus, in John 17:9-23, is speaking of this relationship as well as the outcome of such a relationship on our human relationships. Discuss.
3. Reflect on the 'power of His name' to protect and bring us into perfect unity. How do we take the name of God without taking it in vain?
4. Contemplate the deeper meaning of and the purpose for these statements in Christ's prayer, "I have given them your word" and, "I have given them the glory". Consider them in light of the following statements from Paul and Peter,
   a. "So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image." (2Cor.3:18)
   b. "In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus." (1Pet.5:10)
5. Ponder the import of the following statement as it relates to the excerpts from Jesus' prayer in our reading from John 17:9-23.

   "Scarcely can the human mind comprehend what is the breadth and depth and height of the spiritual attainments that can be reached by becoming partakers of the divine nature. The human agent who yields obedience to God, who becomes a partaker of the divine nature, finds pleasure in keeping the commandments of God; for he is one with God; he holds as vital a relation with God as does the Son to the Father. He understands the oneness that Christ prayed might exist between the Father and the Son."

   (EGW, Youth's Instructor, October 24, 1895)

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Sharing God's Glory

Moses had an intimate relationship with the Lord, and "the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend." (Ex.33:11) While on the Mount Moses asked the Lord, '"Please, show me Your glory." The LORD replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, **Yahweh**, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose."' (V.18-19) In declaring His glory to Moses, the Lord revealed the beauty of His character of love - His goodness, mercy and compassion. These are an expression of who '**Yahweh**' is, that is, His person.

Then God sent His son into the world. He "became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. . ." (John 1:14) In Jesus' last prayer He prayed, "Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!" (John 17:24)

God wants us to know that "the riches and glory of Christ" are for us to experience. "And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory." (Col.1:27) As we have seen, God's glory is revealed in His character, and we can share in His glory as we reflect His character. But there is another element associated with the glory of God. The Lord said, "I will call out my name". God seeks to make a dwelling place for 'His name' in the temple of our heart. David has given us these sublime words, "Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." (Ps.29:2) To live as Christ lived, to love as Christ loved gives glory to His name.

The previous lesson in this series ended with this statement, "The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian." (EGW, God's Amazing Grace, p.276) Let us meditate on the implications of two more quotations from the same author that add to the meaning of being a 'loving and lovable Christian', of living a 'One with HIM', glorious life.

> "Let the Christ-like qualities of love, gentleness, kindness, possess the soul. Let the character of Jesus shine through [our] characters, showing that [we] have the mind of Christ, that [we] are full of tender compassion . . ."
>
> (EGW, Review and Herald, March 4, 1884 - edited to the first person)

> "The golden rule is the principle of true courtesy, and its truest illustration is seen in the life and character of Jesus. Oh, what rays of softness and beauty shone forth in the daily life of our Saviour! What sweetness flowed from His very presence! The same spirit will be revealed in His children. Those with whom Christ dwells will be surrounded with a divine atmosphere. . . . No man who has the true ideal of what constitutes a perfect character will fail to manifest the sympathy and tenderness of Christ."
>
> (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 135)

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Praying as one who is in a 'One with Him' Relationship

Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. Surely it is a perfect example of a 'One with Him' prayer. Let's see how it fully represents a 'one with Him' relationship.

1. ***Our Father in heaven*** - we are His adopted children and we acknowledge His parental rights and bask in His parental care.
2. ***may your name be kept holy*** - it is our responsibility as children to bring glory to our Father's name. Doesn't the commandment say, "Honor your Father . ."?
3. ***May your Kingdom come soon*** - Yes Jesus, come into our hearts as You said, "For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21 NKJV)
4. ***May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*** - may He equip us with all we need to do His will and so bring glory to His name. (cf. Heb.13:21)
5. ***Give us today the food we need*** - Jesus is the bread of life, our spiritual food. As we assimilate His word we become 'One with Him'. We are what we eat.
6. ***and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us*** - Jesus said, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." (Luke 6:37 NKJV)
7. ***And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one*** - "He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand." (cf. 1Cor.10:13)
8. ***For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever*** - Let God reign supreme in our lives because we are 'One with Him', to His honor and glory.

One with Him to His Glory

G	Grow in grace	We "must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All **glory** to him, both now and forever! (2Pet.3:18)
L	Love and trust	We love Him even though we have never seen Him. We trust Him; and rejoice with **glorious**, inexpressible joy. Faith that endures will be rewarded with much praise, **glory** and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed. (based on 1 Pet.1:7,8; also cf. Ps.119:97)
O	Obedience is Oneness	Because we love him we obey Him. Jesus said, "If you love me, obey my commandments . . . All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them ". This is a 'One with Him' relationship. (John 14:15;23; cf. Ex.20:6)
R	Reverence	"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." (Heb.12:29)
Y	Yield to Him	Let's not be stubborn, but yield ourselves to the LORD. Let us "Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name [and] Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." (Based on 2Chron.30:8; Ps.29:2 NKJV)

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SHARING HOPE AND HEALING

The Lord gave Isaiah a message to give to those who claimed to be His devout, God-fearing followers. This message was for those who were regular attendees at Bible studies and worship services. They appear to be faithful but their religiosity, even their fasting is all a front, a pretense. They're trying to impress God, but He sees through their hypocrisy, that they are actually fasting to please themselves. Even while they were fasting they continued fighting and quarreling and giving their workers a hard time. He said, "This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me." (Isa.58:1-4) It's clear that the performance of pious rituals doesn't impress God. Rather, He outlines what constitutes a true fast.

A Bible Reading: (Isa. 58:6-11)

"This is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people.

"Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

"Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind.

"Then when you call, the LORD will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply. Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors!

"Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.

"The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring."

Consider a Contrasting Parable: (Matt.25:31-45)

"But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me."

"Then these righteous ones will reply, "Lord, when did we ever see you hungry

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and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?"

"And the King will say, "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!"

"Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, "Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink. I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me."

"Then they will reply, "Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?"

"And he will answer, "I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.""

Discussion:

1. What is the message that we should draw from these two Bible readings?
2. Isaiah's message focuses on the futility of worship when the motives are wrong and the principles of God's kingdom are not put into practice. Christ's parable focuses on true service, service that seeks no advantage and that flows freely from a recognition of need. Jesus' brother, James says, "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you." (James1:27) Discuss the link between worship and service and the motives that drive them.
3. Discuss the three statements below and determine which is the truest.
   a. Service to others is an obligation we have because we are Christians.
   b. Compassion for those in need compels us to address those needs.
   c. We need to meet the needs of others if we want to enter the kingdom of heaven.
4. Read the following quotation then discuss the highlighted words in the light of their context and the Bible readings we have already read.

   "Those who deny self to do others good, and who devote themselves and all they have to Christ's service, will realize the happiness which the selfish man seeks for in vain. . . . This is the fruit of that **disinterested love and benevolence** which characterized the life of Christ."

   (EGW, Testimonies for the Church, Vol.3, p.397)
5. In the light of all that we have read and discussed so far, consider the attitudes, motives and purposes that drive us to serve others.

> Work with a pure, divinely inwrought purpose to glorify God. . . In active, disinterested service the weak become strong and enjoy His precious commendation. (EGW, Testimonies for the Church, Vol.8, p.33)

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Learning the Right Way to Share by Avoiding the Wrong Way:

(Matt.23:1-7, 11-13,15 NIV)

"Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

"They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for men to see: . . .

"They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'

"The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. . . You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. . ."

Evaluate:

1. Why did Jesus say, "Do what they say but don't do what they do?"
2. Consider the consequences of overburdening people with feelings of failure, guilt and shame. Can Paul's advice to those who face a situation where "another believer is overcome by some sin" help us? He says, "you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ." (Gal.6:1-2)
3. Jesus said, "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted". Paul also echos the same sentiment. "If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important." (Gal.6:3) Why is humility so important?
4. What additional guidelines can we glean from the following statement?

   > "If a believer sins against you, don't embarrass him or her by sharing the fault with others, and don't disgrace the followers of Jesus by making it public. Dealing with wounded souls requires a most delicate touch - handle each difficulty in private, not with a critical or judgmental attitude but with the love of Jesus for this person in your heart. (Jerry D. Thomas, Messiah, p.253)

5. Discuss the things that we need to avoid when helping people with their problems. How can we retain objectivity and avoid becoming part of the problem?

PRACTICE WHAT WE PREACH

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Seek To Serve and Save

S	Selfless seeking	"Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others." " Seek peace and pursue it." (1Cor.10:24; 1Pet.3:11)
H	Hear	"Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given." (Mark 4:24)
A	Availability	Be ready and willing to give of your time to those who need help and to share your walk with them. (cf. 1Tim.6:18 NKJV)
R	Respond	Those who are imbued with the love of Christ, filled with His pity, tenderness, and compassion, will respond to every appeal to their sympathy . . . (EGW, Review and Herald, Oct. 16, 1894)
I	Imitate	Be a model of Christ-likeness. "Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us . . ." (Eph.5:1-2)
N	Never-failing love	"Love never fails." " Love each other deeply with all your heart. . ." (1Cor.13:8 NIV; 1Pet.1:22)
G	Give	"But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity." (Isa.32:8)

H	Help the helpless	"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless." (Prov.31:8-9)
O	Offer	"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." (Rom.12:1)
P	Pray	"Pray without ceasing!" "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." (1Thess.5:17; James 5:16)
E	Embrace wisdom	"Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her; happy are those who hold her tightly. " (Prov.3:18)

"The foundation of our **hope** in Christ is the fact that we recognize ourselves as sinners in need of restoration and redemption. It is because we are sinners that we have courage to claim Him as our Saviour. Then let us take heed lest we deal with the erring in a way that would say to others that we have no need of redemption. Let us not denounce, condemn, and destroy as though we were faultless. **It is the work of Christ to mend, to heal, to restore.**"

(EGW, In Heavenly Places, p.291 - Emphasis supplied)

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